

Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz, "Spain and Islam"

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[translated from the Castilian by K. B. Wolf]

Spain, situated on the western edge of Europe on a primitive, indigenous foundation, witnessed on its soil the accumulation of the most vital elements of the many races that invaded it, the advances of all the different peoples that, from the Celts to the barbarians, first broke through the defensive wall. On this bridge between Europe and Africa, the East and the West had influenced, competed with, and fought with one another. With the West triumphant on our soil after nine centuries of Roman and Visigothic domination, Spain found itself definitively yoked to Europe at the beginning of the eighth century. Built in accordance with the ancient traditions of Rome and steered by the clumsy hands of the barbarians, the ship of Spain made its way along, its course set for the Middle Ages, along with all the other ships from the West; and like them it sailed along the sea of Mediterranean civilization.

Spain had survived the Roman Empire. The barbarian invasion had fractured the political unity of the ancient world, but its cultural and economic units survived. Through language, religion, and the superiority of its institutions, its law, its life of the spirit, and its material life, Roman civilization had had imposed itself on the invaders. As Pirenne underscored, one and the same culture continued to flourish in Gaul, Spain, Italy, Africa, and the East, and although everyday the agrarian economy won new battles against the commercial one, maritime traffic still remained alive, the barbarian kings did not alter the monetary unit with their mintings, and Greek and Syrian ships continued to bring to the West merchandise manufactured in Eastern lands, importing these products to Gaul and Spain.

Though Iberia was more orientalized than its sisters in the West by virtue of its tradition and its land, and Spanish soil was less Germanized by virtue of its not having sustained barbarian colonization during the last centuries of the empire, Spain without a doubt continued along the same route as the other peoples who were heirs to Rome when the Middle Ages first began to dawn. Those two coincidental circumstances had meant a somewhat slower pace in Spain's progress, but were not sufficient to trace for it a different course altogether. One does not need a particularly fine ear to perceive the hoarse Gothic tone in the midst of a thousand Roman voices, or to notice the same bubbling in the boiler of its Germanification when the ship of Spain was surprised by the rough seas of Islam.

Islam came to complete the work of the barbarians. If the barbarians had, in the fifth century, broken the political unity of the ancient world, which was already being undermined ever since Diocletian, the invasion of the Arabs came to fracture the already fragile unity of the civilization and economy of the Mediterranean countries. The sea on whose shores our grandmother civilization had lived up until that time, lost its thousand years of importance forever: different languages, different religions, different institutions dominated the two shores of the Mediterranean from then on; the maritime traffic between Europe and the East barely survived; what remained of the commercial economy continued to cede its position to agrarian life; and European civilization, fleeing from the coasts, became land-based. Islam had broken the economic and spiritual ligatures that had for centuries kept the East and the West connected, and so the ancient world saw itself split into two halves: Germanicized Europe, which had to abandon the Southern Sea, and the Orientalized countries, that remained looking out toward the Mediterranean. After this splitting of the *orbis romanus* into two halves, the Germanicized part, whose center of gravity receded to the north, became feudalized, and the Orientalized part remained seated at the shores of the sea, all the more attached to Mediterranean tradition. Spain, which already, given the nature of its geography, belonged to that part of the ancient world, remained for the time being inside the Islamized half of the Roman Empire.

I can never think without emotion about this moment in the history of the world, so tragic for Spain. Disagreeing with those who see a birth defect (*defecto de origen*) in my country--and for reasons very different than the ones alleged by those others who exclude Spain from the ranks of European peoples--for years the idea that this was the decisive minute in the life of Spain has obsessed me. Without Islam, who can guess what our fate might have been? Without Islam, Spain might have followed the same path as France, Germany, Italy, and England; judging by what we have accomplished over the centuries in spite of Islam, we might even have marched to the front. But it didn't happen that way. Islam conquered the entire peninsula, twisted Iberian destiny, and assigned it a different role in the tragicomedy of history, a role of sacrifice and vigilance, of sentinel and teacher, a role that had enormous significance for the history of Europe, but one that cost Spain dearly.

In the beginning, Spain continued to live from its own, previous essence. Culture and economic life continued in the hands of Spaniards. The Muslims had to spend almost a century to establish and organize themselves, because the invaders did not constitute a single people, but a mosaic of peoples, united by the common bond of religion and, to a degree, by their Mediterranean tradition. An Umayyad, Abd ar-Rahman I, succeeded in imposing himself on the differences that separated the Berbers from the Arabs, the Arabs from the Syrians, the Yemenites from the Qaysites, and fashioning an empire. But the the Saracens stumbled onto another problem. The Spanish, who constituted the majority of the peninsular population--in part converts to Islam and in part still Christian--after the first period of shock and confusion had passed, did not want to suffer the minority yoke and rose up as best they could. In the very capital of the emirate, there were martyrs; far away from it, there were rebels. All of Arab Spain burned with the flames of rebellion: Toledo, Zaragoza, Valencia, Mérida, Ronda... they operated freely and the end of Muslim power in the peninsula seemed near. But a man of extraordinary circumstances, Abd ar-Rahman III, in alliance with the fatigue that all this discord brought with it, succeeded in overcoming the Spanish resistance, refashioning Spanish unity, and fusing the conquerors and the conquered to create a caliphate that we can already consider to be "Hispano-Arab," given its race and geography.

Meanwhile the Muslims of the East and the West, without excluding the Arabized Spaniards, took up and transformed the Greco-Roman cultural legacy of the ancient world and, untangling its own Eastern essences, created Arabic civilization. Iberia quickly blended with this new culture that substituted for and continued the Roman, the eastern Greco-Phoenician, and the indigenous Tartessian traditions. Al-Andalus continued to be in economic contact with the East as it had been for thousands of years, and Spain developed, within the Mediterranean world, all the creative force of its genius; for two centuries it was the richest, most cultured, and most populous country of Europe.

It is no longer appropriate to speak, as we did before, of the darkness of the Middle Ages; but there is no doubt that while Europe lay impaired, spiritually and materially wretched, the Islamized Spaniards created a splendid civilization and economy. The experts on Spanish Arabism of our day--Ribera, Asín, and Gómez Moreno and their already mature and famous disciples--astound us everyday with new reports about the significance, the depth, and the brilliance of this Hispano-Muslim culture. They have reclaimed for Islamic Spain a decisive role in the development of art, philosophy, science, poetry, and medieval European culture as a whole. They have demonstrated that the influences of Hispano-Muslim civilization reached to the highest peaks of Christian thought in the thirteenth century: St. Thomas [Aquinas] and Dante. Although further from the Pyrenees and the Mediterranean on the northside and closer to them on the south, scholars are not likely to to admit such a Hispano-Arab mentorship without a fight, there are already ample proofs in support of it and every day new proofs of the unsuspected flowering of the spiritual and material life of Islamized Spain will emerge. Centuries before the Renaissance made the half-exhausted sources of classical culture sprout again, the river of the richest civilization that the West ever knew during the Middle Ages, of the civilization that knew to preserve the essence of the old world and to transmit them transformed to the new world, flowed in Córdoba and rushed toward the rest of Europe. Never was Spain a beacon for Europe as it was then.

But despite the marvels of Arabized Spain, and although I hold them to be as much mine as the most brilliant manifestations of medieval and modern Hispano-Christian culture, when I contemplate the

Islamic people of today, it terrifies me to think what would have been the fate of Spain if all of it had been left yoked to Islam. As chance would have it, things did not happen that way. Because before Charles Martel's troops saved Europe at Poitiers, the mountain people of Asturias had already saved Europe in Spain, in the mountains of Covadonga. And so Spain was able to be, at one and the same time, the teacher, the channel by which the river of Mediterranean civilization flowed toward the world that was born in the north, and the defensive wall [*muro de choque*], the protective shield against the world that was dying in Africa and the East.

While Europe fought against itself, Spain transformed . . . *created* itself. Christian Spain kept watch and fought for Europe, faced with Islam, and expended its energies in struggles with forces that, left unchecked, would have disrupted the normal development of Europe. Would Charles Martel have been able to act with such freedom if the kingdom of Asturias, about which nothing is remembered in the history of Europe, had not occupied, each year in June and September, the two great Muslim armies that invaded it and fought, with no recourse to any truce, to annihilate it? The consequences of an invasion of France by Al-Mansur, the genius behind the war that emerged in Spain when the Carolingian empire lay dying in the second half of the tenth century, cannot be calculated. Al-Mansur, a mere secretary who had come to be the true sovereign of Arab Spain and who had confined the Christian kingdoms to the rough mountain peaks, could not cross the Pyrenees and leave at his back those enemy states, especially after having chipped his sword trying to conquer them. At the end of the eleventh century and in the last third of the twelfth, Africa sent over to Spain two waves of fanatical Berbers from Senegal and the Atlas, ignited by the most ferocious religious zeal of two new and successive Islamic sects. Without the Christian kingdoms that ran the greatest danger--that were repeatedly beaten at Zalaca, Uclés, and Alarcos, but which in the end were victorious at Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212--France would have had to confront the invasion within its own borders, Europe would have had to expend its energies in the face of western Islam, and the crusades would never have come about, nor would their significant fruits ever have contributed to the development of Europe.

Spain was there for all of this, because that handful of Asturians that, prior to Charles Martel, had detained and defeated Islam, along with those Basques that had triumphed over Charles Martel at Roncesvalles, achieved the reconquest of Spain for Europe little by little, snatching the peninsula from the Saracens step by step, all the while resisting the African attacks, they incorporated Spain into the world that was evolving, the world that was creating modern civilization. But Islam, Mohammad, and the need for daily fighting against the Saracens, tragically impeded Spain from following a course of development similar to its brother peoples of the West.

The first result of the reconquest was the germination of a new phase of Iberian particularism. No one can contest the fact that pre-Roman Spain had been "one" and "multiple" at the same time: one, by reason of the precision of its boundaries, which the ocean and the Pyrenees delimit in such an unmistakable manner; and yet multiple, for ethnic and geographic reasons. For one thing, Spain's complicated vertical configuration and its varied climate diversified it. The high mountain ranges that cross it from north to south and east to west divide it into regions with poor communication between them; with very different climates; and, above all, with very different economies, customs, and ways of life. Moreover the multitude of races--Iberian, Tartessian, Ligurian, Celtic--that had established themselves in Spain, and which countless emigrations and battles, advances and setbacks had broken up and dispersed all over Iberian soil, also contributed to dividing the inhabitants of Spain, fractured into such varied regions. With reason Livy said: "Spain was not the equal of Italy in terms of land, but it was more suited than any region of the world in preparing for war, given the innate qualities of its geography and peoples." And he was speaking the truth. Iberia did not experience a sense of community; no superior political, religious, or racial solidarity unified Spain, and for that reason Rome, which conquered Gaul in a single campaign, had to fight in Spain from the year 212 BC until 19 BC without interruption; because Rome had to fight not one but many different Spains, none of which mattered at all to any of its neighboring "Spains," whose defeats did not alter its designs nor dampen its spirit. Yet in the end this Iberian particularism had been overcome by Rome and the Goths. Seven centuries of living in common under the same government, with one and the same culture, and one and the same religion, had unified Spain. The contrast is noteworthy: the Arabs won in eight years

what the Roman conquered only after more than two centuries. Why? Because, other reasons aside, the Arabs encountered a unified Spain, one fashioned with great effort by the Romans, by the Goths, and by Christianity over the course of seven centuries. That said, this unity was broken again for many centuries when, the day after the Saracen conquest, the Christian *reconquest* began. This reconquest did not sprout--it couldn't have--in only one spot, but in many different places all along the mountain ranges that crossed the north of Spain from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean. Thus were born the kingdoms of Asturias and of Navarre, and the Pyrenean counties. These nuclei of resistance that rose up did not coincide with the remains of any ancient peninsular tribes, nor did the political boundaries of those states match the geographical limits of any natural region or any old Iberian divisions. This shows how effectively the primitive particularism had been overcome; how the new division of Spain was not a simple function of the geography of the country, nor was it the result of an living tradition of pre-Roman Iberia; it was instead the consequence of a natural reaction against Islam which, Spain having been shattered, occurred in various points along the Cantabrian-Pyrenean mountains from Galicia to Catalonia. Without the tragic shock of the Muslim invasion, it is doubtful that Iberian particularism in and of itself would have ever produced a permanent fragmentation of Spain. But now the old particularist roots sprouted again and these new kingdoms lived separately for eight centuries with no other sense of community than their faith in Christ and their need to do battle against the Saracens.

When Islam ceased, for the most part, being a dangerous neighbor, each of these Christian kingdoms directed its gaze toward different horizons, they fought repeatedly among themselves, and their isolation created different languages, patterns, and traditions. Even in the midst of its feudal fragmentation, France was always one. In Germany, the idea of empire always prevailed over the multiplicity of its states. But in Spain there was no *Landesherren*, because it did not have one single monarchy subdivided, but many different little monarchies. Spain's lack of integration, which continues to this day—only history separates Portugal from Spain, identical as they are in everything—had fatal consequences for the future life of the peninsula.

Of all these little monarchies that rose up in reaction to Islam, the most innovative and vital was Castile. It was an innovator in language, insofar as before any of its brothers, it managed to create its own romance language, one which would come to be spoken by 100 million people. It was an innovator in law, in that it broke with the old legal order before the other regions of Spain did. And it was an innovator in the life of the spirit, in that it produced the first medieval literature in the romance language. Castile, born and raised in the plains and accustomed to being able to see, without any obstruction, all the way to the distant horizon of the *meseta* situated in the center of Spain, did not find any sea nearby that would carry its labors to other lands, as happened to Portugal and the Crown of Aragón; nor did it find a different, neighboring kingdom that diverted its attention, pulling it into its politics, as happened in the case of Navarre, vis-a-vis France. All around it, Castile found nothing but Spain and experienced more strongly than any of the other kingdoms the greater solidarity of race, of culture, of traditions, of interests that united the Iberian kingdoms and set them to the task of refashioning Spain. To achieve this, it fought bravely against Islam; it sought marriages, connections, alliances with its brother peoples; and brought its destiny to the lands of Aragon that were not insensitive to the same considerations, and, when it was necessary, made it fight with enthusiasm.

But what was it like, this Castile that made Spain? Castile embodied the most vital part of the ancient kingdom of Asturias, which was the most creative, the closest to Europe; but it was not entirely equal to Europe. In Castile's interior life, the traces of the struggle against Islam remained. The first result of this circumstance was a three-century delay in the emergence of medieval European organization in Castile. In France, the evolution that carried it (with the occasional setback) from the ancient to the medieval worlds had ended in the eighth and ninth centuries and a new society and state had begun to jell. But in the Spanish Christian kingdoms that process had been disrupted. The church and the nobility were bankrupted by the Saracen invasion; their great dominions remained in the south, in Islamic Spain, and in the northern lands they had to depend on the mercy of the monarchs. For its part the crown made itself stronger by virtue of the ruin of their rivals, but moreso by means of the reconquest, given its right to dispose of all the deserted and empty lands that they won from Islam. In

this way the crown acquired enormous properties when the king marched south thorough the deserted territory marked off by the Cantabrian mountains to the north and the Duero River to the south. This zone had been occupied by the African Berbers, but, not content with their portion of the distribution of territorial booty, they emigrated in the middle of the eighth century back to the south to argue with the Arabs over the fertile Andalusian countryside. The kings of Asturias took advantage of this circumstance to lay waste the *meseta*, gather the Christians who lived in it, and relocate them to the mountains of the north, with the intention of repopulating their feeble state with them. After this, as the chronicles and documents testify, the plains of Castile and León remained deserted, life being impossible in that cursed territory, alternately devastated by the Saracens and the Asturians. When the latter managed to conquer this region in the last third of the ninth century, it was necessary to repopulate them. But this colonization could not resemble that of Austria in Carolingian and Ottonian times, with their imperial power and their great lords, who could move their abundant sources of labor to the south, and would find, moreover, that the new land was partly inhabited by a slave population. [In the case of Spain] this repopulation to be achieved by a poor monarchy occupying a few hundred square kilometers of mountainous, miserable territory. There were no great lords capable of sending masses of servants and colonizers to the plains of the Duero. And this all had to be done in an inhospitable wasteland, land that was almost totally deserted. To this territory came people from the kingdom of Asturias as well as Mozarabs, who had come north fleeing the political and religious discord of Arabized Spain. But hindered on all sides by a lack of the resources necessary to occupy such great extensions of land, they limited themselves to breaking up only the amount of soil they could cultivate by themselves. As a result, after this repopulation, large holdings were as rare in the territory of León and Castile as small and medium-sized holdings were common.

As a result, there emerged in the Duero Valley an enormous multitude of free men and a powerful monarchy. As one would expect, given the Romano-Visigothic ancestry of the new kingdom and the atmosphere of that period in Europe, the Leonese monarchy began to evolve toward feudalism; the tenth and eleventh centuries feature the slow formation of large estates and a powerful nobility, a weakening of royal authority, and the rebirth of pre-feudal institutions: immunity, vassalage, and fiefs. But note how this happened centuries later than it did in Europe. As a result the development of our institutions would never have been identical to that of Europe. But it was not to be, in any case, because the reconquest and its effects did not cease. The constant state of war in which Castile lived meant that the accumulated powers that in other states had been slowly appropriated by the magnates remained concentrated in the hands of the kings. Moreover, with each new advance toward the south--by the end of the eleventh century, the Tajo had been established as the frontier; by the beginnings of the thirteenth, the Sierra Morena; and towards the middle of that century, the Guadalquivir Valley--the monarchy displayed its strength anew in fabulous ways, occupying immense new domains, on which multitudes of free men grew with each repopulation. As a result of these repeated advances, the monarchy, prevailing over the aristocracy and the church by means of its new territorial acquisitions, managed, more than once, to check the always slow progress of feudalization in the kingdom. Moreover an enormous network of municipalities and cities was emerging in the areas taken from Islam, and they were directly dependent on the crown. At the end of this long process, Castile was organized in this way: at the top, a powerful monarchy; in the middle, a small number of great lords who were legally in strict subordination to the monarchy; and at the bottom, an enormous multitude of people, made up of the inhabitants of the municipalities and the *hidalgos* who, although noble, in the end were part of the people.

The division of labor was only altered when La Mancha, Extremadura, and more than half of Andalucía were taken [in the thirteenth century]. In effect, the conquered lands tended geographically to be huge properties; they were inhabited by Saracens when the Christians occupied them; and among the Christians there already existed at the time a relatively powerful military class [*casta*], an organized nobility. In this same period, the threat of Islam vanished by itself, and there arose, one after the other, two great dynastic conflicts [within Castile]. Suspending for centuries the march to the south, the frontier zones were fixed for the same period of time. As a result of these geographic, social, and political factors, the nobility enriched itself tremendously while the monarchy lost forever the possibility of restoring its treasury, and was weakened on occasion to the point of powerlessness.

But the reality of this periodic powerlessness in the Middle Ages could alter neither Castile's political conception nor its legal organization, which had been woven together over seven centuries; even less at a time when feudalism in Europe was heading toward its own demise and the revival of Roman law--*entre nous*, very early--added in theory to the power of kings. Besides, the combination of the lack of organization on the part of a Castilian nobility characterized by a spirit of discord, and the power of the municipalities and cities--which had learned how to come together and, in exchange for new liberties and their intervention in the government (the Castilian parliament was the European one most dominated by the third estate), supported the monarchy against the aristocracy--impeded the aristocracy from turning their new economic and political clout into legal advantages. As a result Castile approached the modern age with a monarchy that, once it had divided the popular element and subjected its assemblies, was omnipotent *de iure*. And when the Catholic Kings saw to it that this omnipotence would also be *de facto*, the modern state emerged among us earlier and with more power than among any other people in the West. If this gave us hegemony in Europe in the sixteenth century, it also permitted the monarchs to create their state-church (already outlined by Ranke and admirably defined by Fernando de los Rios); a state-church in the sense that that, as in Italy or in Russia today, the state stops being a "coordinating organ of actions, that is tolerant toward thought" and becomes a church that, in the name of a dogmatic ideal, defines and condemns. If the political inheritance of the Middle Ages contributed in this way to our military power in the modern age, facilitating the creation of a super-state, it also played a role in our demise. Because if other peoples constituted their ideal of state-church in the greatness of their homeland (as Russia has recently done, connecting it to the world revolution), Spain imagined it as the maintenance of the Catholic unity of the world and then sacrificed its own life to it.

The damaging effect of Islam on the economy is also palpable. This manifested itself, in the first place, just as it did in the case of political organization: as an initial retardation in relation to Europe. Christian Spain spun for five centuries in the economic orbit of Islamized Spain and the Frankish empire, yet it limited itself to being a consumer country with negligible industrial production and a commerce totally monopolized by the Muslims and the Jews of the south and by the Franks in the north. For nearly four hundred years the Christian kingdoms employed almost no other minted currency than the Frankish and the Arab, and the kings of Castile put off for almost another hundred years the minting of a gold *numerio*. And just as they had done when fabricating the silver *numerio* at the end of the eleventh century, so they did when they created the gold *numerio* in the last third of the twelfth: they faithfully imitated the Frankish and Arab coins respectively. In Christian Spain, there was no room for economic activity; the reconquest absorbed all the energies of the society and, so, for the duration of this most decisive period in the development of the European economy, European Spain remained stagnant, with a miserable economic life, and within the sphere of influence of the Islamized countries.

Without a doubt, things changed with the great conquests of the thirteenth century, which incorporated the great cities of the south and the east into the Christians kingdoms, and which, at the same time, made the military threat of Islam and the former Muslim supply centers disappear. On the one hand, with the enemy conquered--although the Saracen kingdom of Granada survived--the resources of the northern states were no longer consumed in the campfire of daily war, and there was energy left over for the purposes of industrial and commercial life. On the other, the conquests of the productive and commercial centers of the south and east disrupted their foreign provisioning, which up to then had supplied the Christian markets, thus creating henceforth the need to produce for national consumption. Thus Christian Spain began at that time its own economic life on a grand scale and incorporated itself into the European economic sphere. But the damage was already irreparable. By the second half of the thirteenth century it was already too late for an incipient economy to equip itself and compete with the industrial centers of the Low Countries and Italy, or even with those of France and Germany. Moreover, when the new commercial order of Europe had been created, while the Saracens still ruled the Mediterranean Sea and Spain remained distant from the Christian peoples, it had constituted, as a single axis of European economic life, the zone that extended from Lombardy to the Low Countries, westward from Germany and eastward from France. As a result, when we began to incorporate ourselves definitively in the non-Islamic commercial world, we found ourselves

unfavorably situated in relation to that central line, that crossed the old Carolingian empire from north to south. Finally, although our traffic with Muslim countries was not completely disrupted, it was, from then on, minimal and, therefore, the Spanish markets, upon losing their former centers of provisioning and their previous markets, could not easily secure new ones: Genoa, Pisa, Venice, etc., in the south and Flanders in the north had dominated the markets for centuries. How different the history of our economy would have been without Islam; if the Mediterranean world had not been split, and the sea had continued serving as at least one of the axes of world economic life, with one of its ends supported necessarily in Spanish territory. What heights of importance would the entire coast of Spain from the Pyrenees to Portugal not have achieved? But this did not happen in this way, and our industry was reduced to provisioning our own markets and our own foreign trade, to importing manufactured merchandise and products, and exporting raw materials in unequal and unfavorable proportions.

Islam contributed in two other ways to damaging our economic development. The fragmentation of Spain that resulted, as we have already said, from the Saracen invasion, not only created different states but also different economies. These economies, born with independence and later separated by political frontiers as well as by tolls, lived apart during their adolescence and upon flowering in their maturity, they directed themselves toward very different horizons: the Castilian economy toward the Muslim countries of the south and toward Flanders in the north, and the Aragonese-Catalan economy toward the Mediterranean. And that divorce, to which the documents and especially the coins attest-- Castile imitated the *dobla* of the Almohads and Aragon, the Italian florin-- had without a doubt to be unfavorable for the great Christian monarchies, as it was for the future riches of Spain. Damaging in its own right for the Spanish economy was the military over-stimulation (*superexcitación militar*) that we endured as a consequence of the fight against Islam. It siphoned off a significant amount of Spanish energy from economic life, inclining it toward the exercise of arms, where it was possible to prosper without great effort the day that the borders advanced into the Moorish lands for Castile, into Italian businesses for Aragon, or into maritime exploration for Portugal. And this permanent separation of the most daring and the most audacious from their such peaceful zones, deprived Spanish industry and commerce of that spirit of enterprise that produced the economic greatness of the Italian, Flemish, French, and German cities. Thanks to Islam, therefore, and not withstanding the undeniable flowering of Spanish industry and commerce during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, our economy could never equip itself like those of the fortunate peoples strategically situated in the center of world traffic, more merchants than warriors, whose economic development was emerging in the early Middle Ages.

But the fatal influence of Saracen domination in Spain not only affected economic life and political organization. It also produced reactions that were pregnant with sad corollaries in the most intimate fibers of the Spanish soul. The centuries of war, both in resistance and in conquest, that intervened between the rout [orchestrated by] Rodrigo and the victory at Salado created in Christian Spain an overflowing dynamism, a military over-stimulation that, when the reconquest was interrupted, brought Aragon to dominate Italy and the east, pushed Portugal to explore the Atlantic and Africa, and raised up dynastic storms in Castile. Excited by this militaristic, adventure-loving activism, Spain crossed the boundary of the Middle Ages. This activism gave us a superiority in war compared to the other peoples in the west; but it also created a Spanish imperialism at the dawn of the modern age that, taken advantage of by the Habsburgs for enterprises far from our destiny and our interests, in the end had to be fatal for us.

Constantly living together [*el convivir*] with the Muslims on the same Spanish soil had fostered among the educated elite of the Spanish Christian kingdoms a spirit of tolerance that was rare in Europe in those centuries. The French crusaders, on the day before [the battle of] Las Navas [de Tolosa], abandoned Alfonso VIII as a result of his mild dealings with the conquered Saracens; Peter II of Aragon died at the Battle of Muret fighting at the head of the Albigensian heretics against the papal legate; and various Castilian and Aragonese monarchs surrounded themselves with Moors and Jews, had their houses built by Islamic masons, and enjoyed Muslim customs. But at the same time, the no less constant fighting with the Muslims over the course of hundreds and hundreds of years produced an exacerbation of the religious sentiment, always alive, of the Iberians and if, as we have tried to verify, the political organization that emerged in Castile as a result of the reconquest brought with it the

relative weakness of the lay aristocracy, the religious character of the struggle with the Saracens in the first centuries of the Middle Ages preserved and augmented the excessive growth [*hipertrofia*] of the material power and the spiritual influence of the church, which had been noticeable already in Visigothic times. Among no people of Europe, not even in countries like Germany and Italy, did the clergy achieve a level of power and influence similar to that obtained by the church in our own land. The crown and the people, the two basic strengths of Spanish medieval society, were governed by a minority (counter to what has been said, we had governing minorities that were listened to and followed by the masses), an *ecclesiastical* minority that, given the right occasion, encouraged the confusion of religion and homeland, unavoidably provoked by the age-old religious war, to mold the Spanish spirit to its liking and launch Spain into the Counter Reformation. During the Middle Ages, Spain was ruled by a clerical minority that--upon tracing the path of the exterior life and of the government of my country in the religious crisis of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries--had to place, in every case, the interests of the ideals whose interpretation it assumed for itself, before the interests of Spain, and in this manner rendered impossible a flexible, comprehensive policy. Without it [i.e., this clerical minority]--even with Spain still in the Catholic camp, just as our neighbor France kept itself Catholic, yet sponsored and achieved a true reform of the church--we would not have sacrificed to Catholicism the freedom of spirit and the greatness of the nation.

Finally, if the centuries old struggle with Islam produced the excessive growth of the Spanish clergy and fostered a military over-stimulation, it contributed also to the attenuation of the political sensibility of the people in three ways: in a direct way, educating the masses to obey the monarchy; in two indirect ways, diverting their interest toward the little regional and local questions and impeding the formation of great commercial and manufacturing centers, which are always more attentive to public life than the rural multitudes. The permanent state of struggle helped accustom the society to the discipline that every serious struggle imposes on the nation that understakes it. Even more when the war with the Almoravids, the Almohads, the Marinids, and the Moorish kingdom of Granada stirred up the fervor of a national and religious struggle, as a thousand details testify, among others, the repeated and generous subsidies for it voted by the Castilian parliament. When, after the death of Alfonso XI, the character of the struggle with Islam changed into mere frontier skirmishes, interrupted by frequent, drawn-out truces, it was very late for the Castilian psychology, formed slowly over the previous six centuries, to change.

But although there might not have existed such an atmosphere of warlike enthusiasms, favorable for blunting the political sentiments of the people, still the multitudes most likely to interest themselves in public matters were missing. The aristocracy was an avaricious minority of privileges without liberties; and among the people, made up of hidalgos, the bourgeoisie, and farmers, the merchant and industrial classes hardly amounted to anything. The precariousness of our economy, even in its periods of splendor, not only gave priority to the rural population over the urban, but by permitting the overflow of ruralism from the countryside to the towns, deprived the towns of the leadership function that typically fell to them. The Castilian cities were essentially agricultural and, because the laboring multitudes have always been less sensitive to the public life, this explains why the uninterrupted struggle with Islam blunted, at least indirectly, Spanish political sensibility, as it impeded the economic development of the peninsula. In contrast with the vital interest that the urban bourgeoisies on the other side of the Pyrenees and the Mediterranean Sea had in the business of the state, the Castilian people watched almost always indifferently as the monarchy separated them little by little from the government of the kingdom.

Because the Aragonese-Catalan reconquest ended earlier, and afterward it undertook the Sicilian wars with France and the pope, wars that did not ignite the fervor of a crusade, this sibling to the people of Castile, though suffering from the same disease, always reacted with greater vitality than we did when faced with public matters. The greater dedication to industry and commerce in the cities of the Spanish Mediterranean coast also created bourgeoisies with sharper political sensibilities. But the Aragonese crown was not free from danger. As a result of the struggle with Islam, its field of vision did not reach very high. All of its interest in public matters was turned toward minuscule, domestic questions; it did not manage to lift its sight to Spanish problems that, the other way around, made Castile shake with

violence. The fragmentation of the peninsula that the reaction against Islam had produced made Aragon suffer from myopia.

In summary, see now the tragedy that Islam created in Spain, the inheritance left to Spain by Muhammad. First of all, a nonexistent, multiple Spain, super-feudalized, disintegrated into different kingdoms that are jealous, vigilant, and hostile, with distinct ideals and separate economies. Second, an essential Castile with its omnipotent monarchy at the top and at its base a particularist people, separated by the monarchy from the governance of the realm and cut into unconnected municipalities, and with no other foreign policy than the termination of the reconquest and the creation of a unified Spain. And finally, the only connection tying together so many differences: not a joining of economic interests, but a religious hypersensitivity and a military over-stimulation, resting within the emptiness of a backward and divided economy.

In one aspect only was Islam *not* bad for us. Spilling the essence of the glass of Arab-Spanish culture onto European Spain, Hispano-Arab art, literature, philosophy, and science bore the most abundant fruit in the northern kingdoms, cultivating the Hispanic spirit and preparing it for the early reception and a marvelous flowering of the Renaissance on our soil.

And so arrived that happy moment when the Catholic Monarchs, Isabel of Castile and Fernando of Aragon achieved, by marrying, Spanish unity; but this was also the moment when, while this was being accomplished, that Islam stopped sensing its influence, already dying in Spanish territory. The personal unity of the monarchs, achieved by means of their marriage, was a propitious omen of a gentler wind blowing. Fernando and Isabel understood this and launched the project of joining together their states. But how to achieve this? The first great success of the Aragonese and Castilian crowns, the conquest of the Moorish kingdom of Granada and with it the expulsion of Islam from Spanish soil, firmed up their military dynamism and fortified that identification between religion and homeland that contact, both peaceful and warlike, with the Saracens had rooted in the Spanish mind. Islam, which was dying in al-Andalus, ended up poisoning Spain. The Catholic Monarchs very soon became victims of this terrible poison and, with an innocent hand, administered the potion to its kingdoms. First, they abandoned the traditional tolerance of the two monarchies, Castilian and Aragonese, and let themselves be conquered by the ideas and sentiments of the ecclesiastical minority, and believed they could achieve the fusion of their poorly united kingdoms, converting national unity into a unity more religious than political. Second, to accelerate the union of their states and their peoples, they revived the ancient rivalry between Catalonia and France in the Mediterranean and in Italy, and took advantage of Hispanic activism for an expansionist, warlike foreign policy that would join its disparate subjects by the common denominator of victory.

This double policy of Isabel and Fernando has always been damaging to Spain, but as the luck of history would have it, it turned to be much worse than anything the most subtle divination could have augured. Destiny decided that the heir of the Catholic Monarchs would be a Habsburg, who at the same time that he received from his maternal grandparents (along with the kingdoms of Spain) the banner of Spanish religious unity, he inherited from Maximilian the German empire, where Luther was dividing the consciences of Europe. This union with Germany was worse than awful for Spain. Charles V launched Spain launched into central-European politics that were contrary to its destiny. Philip II--remembering how his father had been beaten in Germany, and how Germany had been destroyed and the imperial power left in ruins by religious discord--wanted to avoid that danger in Spain. If Charles, the emperor, the last medieval warrior king, pushed us out of the natural orbit of our political action, Philip, the first modern, bureaucratic, and sedentary sovereign, drawn by religious conceptions that the Hispanic ecclesiastical minority had etched in his brain, distorted the policies of the Catholic Monarchs to the very limits of intolerance and indeed of the absurd. And the continuation of such conduct by successive Philips ruined in fewer than two generations that marvelous flowering of Spanish thought, that one positive legacy that Islam had bequeathed to us.

Without Islam, a united, albeit feudalized, Spain would have had no need for the dangerous fusions employed by the Catholic Monarchs; it would have displayed the cohesion and strength that it lacked

in the sixteenth century and it would not have suffered the tragic agony of 1640, when Portugal and Catalonia, with their rebellions, pushed us to the abyss. Without Islam, the wealth of Spain would have grown on par with that of its sisters in Western Europe and would have rivalled theirs; the national economy would not have been fragmented into a series of different economies; the organization of the Spanish estate would have been unique; peninsular economic and financial power in the sixteenth century would have been greater; and Spain would have been able to endure, with less fatigue, the burden of its empire, which weighed solely on Castilian wealth and property. Without Islam, Spain probably would not have suffered that religious hypersensitivity, nor the overgrowth of its clergy, that succeeded in preserving the Roman Catholic faith in my homeland in the days of the Reformation (which many of us celebrate) but which pushed Philip II to create a state church and to bleed the Hispanic nation by fighting "all the roads of the world" to preserve the religious unity of Europe. And without Islam, with Spain feudalized like Europe, with one monarchy less omnipotent; with a ruling minority preoccupied, above all, with the national destiny; and with a people of normal religious and military sensibilities, the nation would not have let itself be dragged by the military adventures of the Habsburgs to the borders of their convenience and their interests; they would have known to react against the despotism of a foreign dynasty, whose foreign policy ruined Spain economically, and whose internal actions killed--in spite of Kempler--the splendid Spanish Renaissance, and stagnated the Hispanic spirit for centuries.

Spain is not, therefore, a people with a birth defect or a hereditary blemish; it is not the slow progeny of a debased father, nor an Africanized country sick with an oriental virus, lacking a creative spirit, the runt of Islam. It is a vital and capable nation that had to sacrifice itself as a shield for Europe in the face of Africa, clumsy and barbaric; an active part of the European world that created and transmitted to Europe the richest, most varied and splendid civilization that the Middle Ages ever knew, but that had to maintain its age-old vigilance against Islam, and that vigilance retarded its own natural development; a western people only occasionally separated from the routes of its European brothers by its own thousand-year ambition to reject the contagion from neighboring Africa; a people that, like all of Europe, experienced its Middle Ages and its Renaissance, but agitated by a series of internal reactions within it, produced by its struggle against Islam. If despite this delay and this detour, Spain is deserving of compassion for its American project (*empresa de América*) and for the marvels of its civilization, when we do finally overcome a past that still weighs heavily on the shoulders of the present and erase the last vestiges of those reactions, who can guess Spain's future? In history the years are like minutes.